

ICM Midwife Leaders Executive Sponsorship Programme



Elevating midwives, transforming leadership, strengthening health systems

The ICM Midwife Leaders Executive Sponsorship Programme pairs emerging and established midwife leaders with senior executives in a two-year initiative to accelerate careers, influence and impact. Sponsorship is an unpaid commitment of time, and expertise.

Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE, Chief Midwife, ICM; Kate Stringer, Midwife Advisor, ICM; Executive Sponsors: Ashu Martha, Lia Brigante, Prof. Doreen Kaura, Sheena Byrom, and Elke Slagt-Tichelman; Sponsees: Jane Mbaluka, Liz McNeill, Marijke Noorlander, and Inma Nunez; Graphic Designer, ICM.



When midwives lead, communities thrive. When midwife leaders have sponsors, systems change.

What is it?

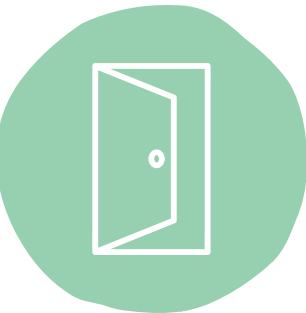


A high impact leadership programme that pairs midwife leaders (sponsees) with senior executives (sponsors), who champion their growth, visibility and influence

The programme is about:

- Creating powerful relationships
- Opening doors and opportunities
- Building confidence and influence
- Driving change for women, newborns, and communities

What does it do?



Opens doors
Sponsors use their position and networks to create access to opportunities, people, and platforms.



Amplifies Voices
Sponsees gain visibility and are encouraged to contribute to important conversations and decisions



Accelerates growth
Through guidance, feedback and advocacy, sponsors help midwife leaders progress into bigger roles and impact



Strengthens systems
Stronger midwife leadership leads to better policies, services and outcomes for women and newborns

Who is it for?



Midwife leaders (sponsees)
Ambitious and values-driven midwife leaders ready to grow their influence and make a greater impact in their organisations, communities and countries



Executive leaders (sponsors)
Senior leaders (inside or outside the midwifery profession) who are passionate about gender equality, midwifery, and healthier futures.

How does it work?

1

Application & Selection
Midwife leaders and Executive sponsors submit an expression of interest. ICM looks for potential commitment and alignment.

2

Careful Matching
ICM thoughtfully pairs sponsees and sponsors based on goals, experience and shared values.

3

Kick Off & Orientation
Pairs set goals, agree on expectations and begin their sponsorship journey.

4

Ongoing Engagement
Regular 1:1 meetings, strategic introductions, feedback and championship in actions.

5

Learning & Community
Workshops, peer learning, and a global community of midwife leaders and allies.

6

Impact & Celebration
We measure impact, share success stories and celebrate progress and achievements.

A **sponsee** is an emerging midwife leader, or a leader who aims to become a senior midwife leader, and is currently in an informal, or formal leadership role.

An **executive sponsor** is a senior leader at executive or ministerial level or equivalent, who leads, or is in charge of an organisation, business, region, or country.

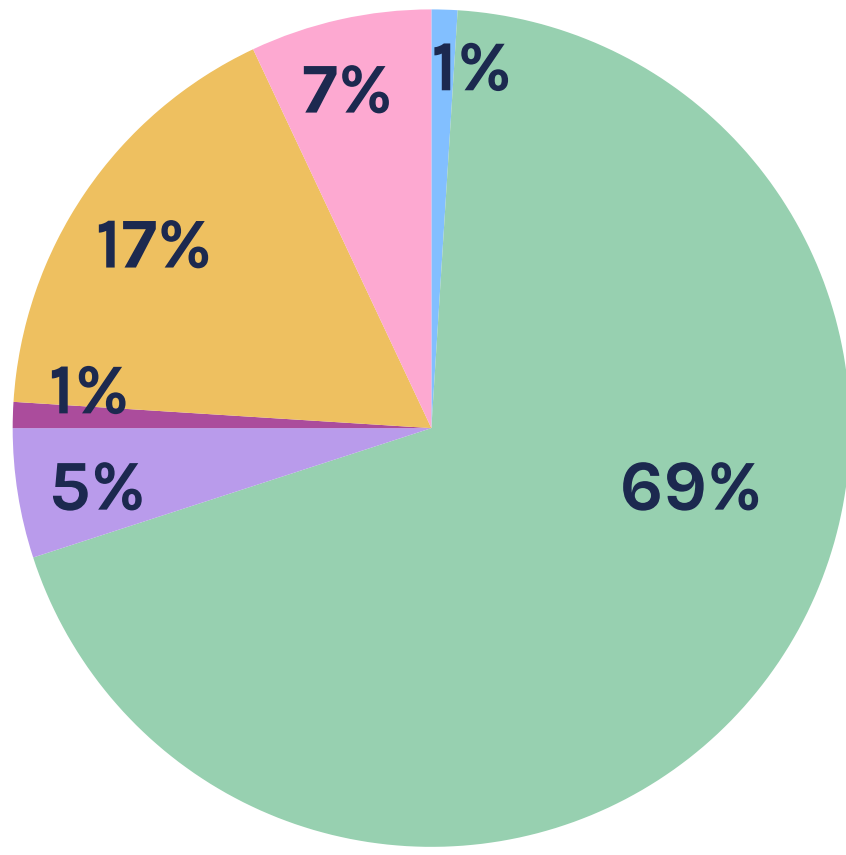
Midwife Leaders Executive Sponsorship Programme, Cohorts One and Two

Cohort One commenced in June 2025, and Cohort Two commenced in March 2026. Together, expressions of interest were received from 148 Sponsors and 183 Sponsees (Figure 1). Across both cohorts, we have 107 matched Sponsor and Sponsee pairs

Expressions of interest to become a sponsee

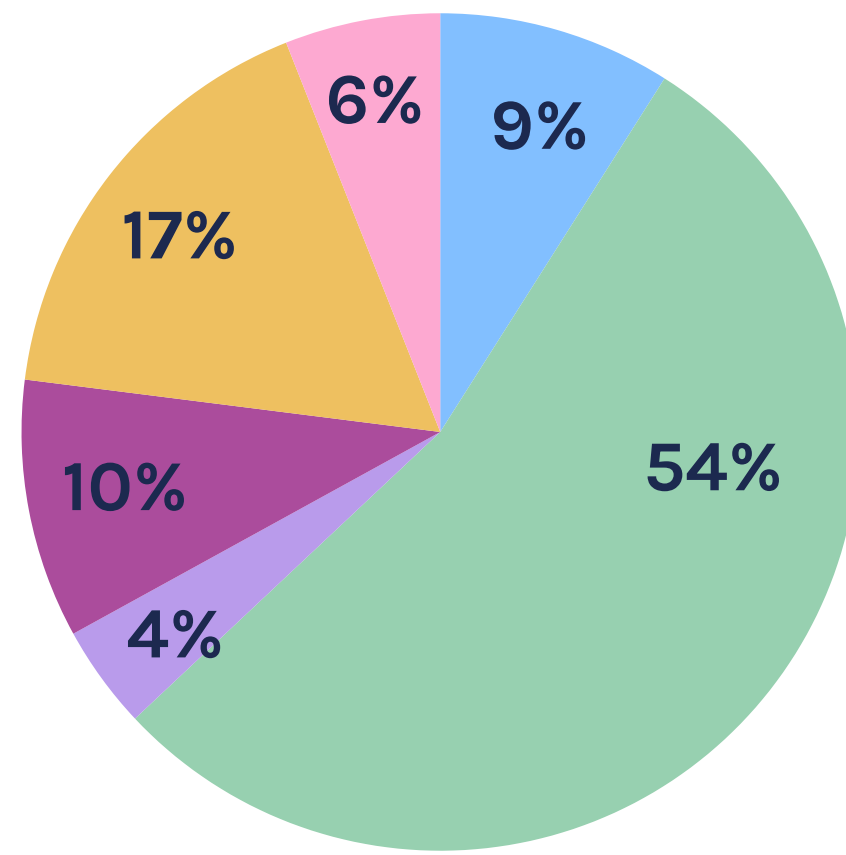
Cohort 1: 106

- Africa, 73
- America, 5
- EM, 1
- Europe, 18
- SEA, 8
- WP, 1



Cohort 2: 79

- Africa, 43
- America, 3
- EM, 8
- Europe, 13
- SEA, 5
- WP, 7



Executive Sponsors

Executive sponsors come from diverse professional backgrounds and hold senior strategic leadership positions across health systems and related sectors. Sponsors include board members, executive and non-executive directors, members of parliament, directors, and other senior decision-makers. Their collective experience provides participants with high-level sponsorship, leadership exposure, professional guidance, and opportunities to strengthen influence, visibility, and strategic networks nationally and internationally.

Evaluation

Evaluation will take place throughout the programme and will include process, impact, and outcome evaluation. Process evaluation will examine programme implementation, including participant engagement, delivery methods, sponsorship interactions, and operational effectiveness; impact evaluation will assess immediate and intermediate effects such as increased leadership confidence, networking opportunities, visibility, and career progression; and outcome evaluation will explore longer-term contributions to midwifery leadership, organisational influence, policy engagement, and strengthened professional capacity.

Together, these approaches will support continuous learning and inform improvements for future cohorts

Be Part of the Movement

Sponsor, be sponsored, champion change
The next cohort is planned for 2027.
More information will be available on the ICM website in November 2026.

